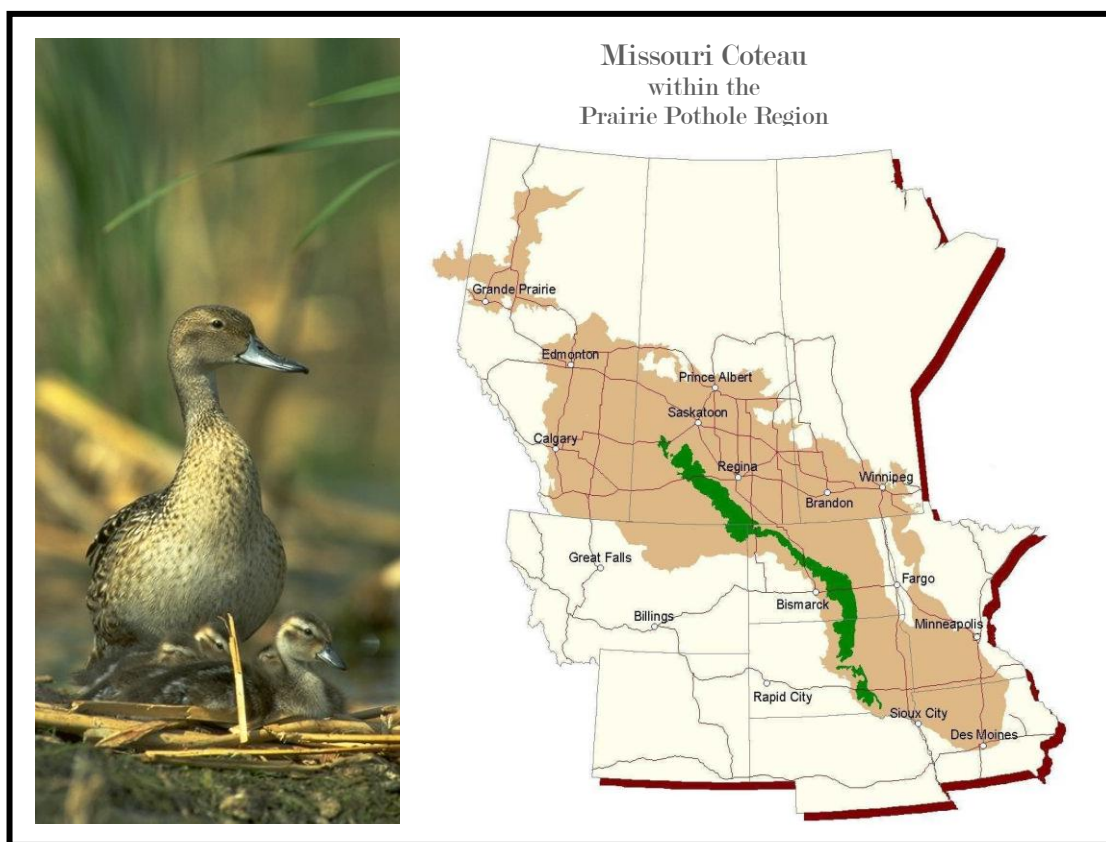


Final Report: April 2004 – March 2005



Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries



submitted by:

Ducks Unlimited Canada

and

Ducks Unlimited Inc.

June 2005



Table of Contents

	Page
Funding and Partnerships	2
• Revenue table	
Target Area	3
• Coteau Diversity	
• Predicted Waterfowl Density map	
Agriculture and Ag. Policy	4
• Agricultural	
• Ag Policy Advancements	
Waterfowl and Habitat	5
• Waterfowl Status	
• Habitat Conditions	
Program Highlights	6
• Conservation Easements	
• Rangeland Stewardship	
• FY05 Summary Table	
Program Accomplishments	7
• Coteau Legacy Plan Accomplishments	
Program Accomplishments (continued)	8
• Cumulative accomplishments table	

Funding and Partnerships:






During 2004 the Missouri Coteau remained one of the critical areas of focus for Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC). Generous program funding from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has allowed the Coteau Legacy program to advance towards its conservation goals for this critical waterfowl landscape. LDWF funds were leveraged over 4 times through strong ongoing relationships between various conservation partners in Canada and the United States made possible through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP). State agency and DU Inc. funds in conjunction with U.S. Federal funding through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) has allowed DUC's Saskatchewan Operations to accelerate its efforts to

conserve and restore valuable acres of wetland and upland habitat. NAWCA provides matching funds for habitat conservation on Crown and private lands alike, and promotes extension activities that foster good land stewardship ethics to private landowners. The securement, enhancement and technical assistance components of program delivery all play an integral part in long-term waterfowl population recovery.

This report highlights DUC's program and partnership successes within the Missouri Coteau during the period April 1, 2004 through to March 31, 2005. DUC wishes to acknowledge the continued generous financial support of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, during this, the second year of program funding.

Missouri Coteau – FY 2005

	REVENUE	US \$	Cdn \$	
	LDWF	240,000	321,600	
	DU Inc.	240,000	321,600	
	NAWCA	480,000	643,200	
	Other Partners	442,810	593,365	
	Totals	1,402,810	1,879,765	

*Conversion Rate (US\$ X 1.34 = \$ Cdn)

Target Area: Missouri Coteau “Hills of the Prairie”



Coteau Diversity

At the heart of the Prairie Pothole Region is the Missouri Coteau or “hills of the prairie”. The Missouri Coteau is a 25,700 square mile band of recessional moraine, 10 to 50 miles wide, which stretches from Saskatchewan southeasterly into North and South Dakota. The Missouri Coteau is a broken escarpment characterized by gently rolling to rugged hills that generate high wetland densities. During wet years these highly productive prairie wetlands in concert with an abundance of native grassland provide some of the very best waterfowl habitat in North America. The Missouri Coteau is a last vestige of prairie grasslands and pothole wetlands that once dominated the Prairie Region.

Waterfowl values of the Coteau have long been recognized. High densities of waterfowl (Fig. 1) are drawn to these breeding grounds annually. Bill Leitch, one of DUC's first biologists referred to the Coteau as “highly desirable duck breeding habitat” (Leitch 1952). During wet years this landscape is critically important to the recovery of waterfowl populations. The frequency of drought and dynamic changes within the wetlands of the Coteau creates highly productive habitat for breeding waterfowl. Attractive to breeding mallards, gadwall, Blue wing teal and northern shoveler, the Coteau also supports some of the highest breeding densities of pintails in the prairies.

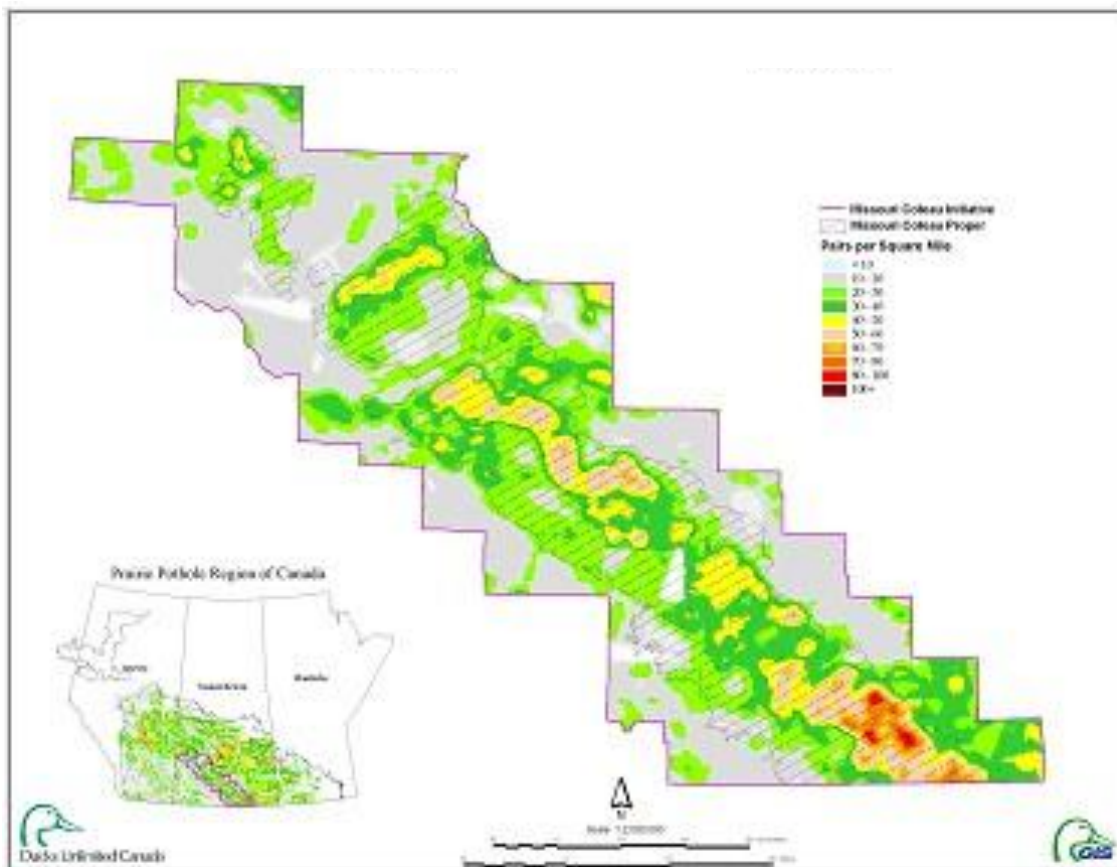


Figure 1. Predicted breeding waterfowl density and distribution within the Missouri Coteau.

Agriculture and Ag. Policy

FY 2005



AGRICULTURE

2004 proved to be a challenging year for agricultural producers in Canada. Much colder than normal growing conditions throughout the summer and an early fall frost (August 20 across much of the Prairies) led to significant financial losses due to downgraded crop quality. For those fortunate enough to avoid frost, crop production was average to above average. Interest in winter cereals has grown significantly with many seed growers indicating that their entire production was pre-sold last fall. Unfortunately, the late harvest did not allow many producers to seed winter wheat. DUC is hopeful that interest among producers will result in 2005 seeded acreage exceeding the highs of the mid 1980's.

The cattle industry continued to suffer low prices due to closure of the U.S. border to the import of some Canadian beef. Producer interest in seeding additional acres to forage continues to be high, due in part to an increased inventory of cattle.

AG POLICY ADVANCEMENTS

Marginally productive agricultural land continues to be converted perennial cover in the Prairies, much of it with the assistance provided under the Greencover program, a component within the Agricultural Policy Framework. To date, approximately 250,000 acres have been enrolled in the Green Cover Canada program. Funding was also available for technical assistance efforts that support beneficial management practices (BMPs) of interest to DUC, including riparian area management and land conversion. DUC continues to promote the addition of BMPs that improve the landscape for waterfowl

including wetland and riparian restoration and stewardship, winter wheat, and the stewardship of native and natural lands. In 2005, a DUC Conservation Specialist was seconded to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to work on their Ecological Goods and Services work plan and policy paper. This detail demonstrates a good working relationship between DUC and the federal agriculture department.

Land purchase continues to be a conservation tool used by Ducks Unlimited Canada. In Saskatchewan, DUC is actively purchasing land in partnership with the Provincial Government.

Strong provincial and federal support for the implementation of integrated watershed management (IWM) practices provides an opportunity to improve the understanding of wetland values. In 2005, DUC is involved in the development of two important documents that are helping to guide discussion on Ecological Goods and Services and IWM. The first, "Natural Values", outlines the valuable role wetlands and upland management play in water quantity and quality. The second, "The Value of Natural Capital in the Settled Areas of Canada" was commissioned by DUC in partnership with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and written by Dr. Nancy Olewiler, a well-known economist from Simon Fraser University. DUC is actively involved as a technical support member of several IWM groups in priority waterfowl habitat areas and is carrying an important message on the value of wetland conservation and restoration to maintain and improve watershed health.

Waterfowl and Habitat: 2004 - 2005 Conditions



The Missouri Coteau is situated within the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Waterfowl Survey Stratum # 32.

The Province of Saskatchewan experienced below average spring pond conditions in 2004, during the USFWS surveys. Provincially, pond numbers were 25% below the long-term average and 56 % below the 2003 pond numbers. Stratum 32 experienced below average spring pond numbers. Late spring precipitation improved conditions for late nesting pair and brood rearing habitat.

In spite of below average habitat conditions in early spring, stratum 32 attracted an estimated

2.1 million waterfowl in 2004. Fifteen species of waterfowl were recorded on the May 2004 breeding survey of Stratum 32. The USFWS July waterfowl brood counts were not conducted in 2004 however brood habitat conditions were much improved over 2003.

In summary the 2004 waterfowl production year in the Missouri Coteau was characterized by below average spring pond conditions leading to below average predicted production followed with good late season precipitation. This combination resulted in improved brood habitat and much better soil moisture conditions going into the winter of 2004-05.



Valjean community pasture is under a long term agreement to annually defer grazing on 75% of the 4000 acres until July 1st. As well the agreement will protect existing native uplands and wetlands for the next 15 years. Photo taken May 30, 2004

Program Highlights:

"Conservation Easements and Rangelands"



Consistent with the three primary goals of the "Coteau Legacy Conservation Plan" (Protection, Improved Function and Compensation) as indicated in the FY2005 proposal to LDWF, conservation funding from states and other sources were pooled to provide maximum impact on the landscape.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

The FY 2005 target for conservation easements in the Missouri Coteau was the protection of 1000 acres of native uplands and wetlands. Due to an outstanding effort, 6089 acres were secured. The primary reason for this great success hinges on DUC's many long and positive relationships with producers across the Coteau. It is trust in an organization like DUC that allows us to be so successful with conservation easements. With the strong partnership support of Sask Environment

through the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund we were able to match every dollar spent in this program.

RANGELAND STEWARDSHIP

The overwhelming success of this program in establishing avenues to influence over 200,000 acres is made possible only by being a part of the agricultural community. The waterfowl value of this program is difficult to measure. However, many producer partnerships begin with our extension work on rangeland stewardship. Our recent visit to Louisiana this January brought Emile and Sandra Carles from the Missouri Coteau to speak at the Louisiana Cattlemen's Association meetings in Lafayette. The Carles are one example of many producers who have been positively influenced to incorporate conservation practices into their cattle operations.

SUMMARY- FY05

Goal	Acre Goals	Actual Acres	Cost-CDN \$,000	% Accomplished
Protection	80,000	102,012	\$1043	128%
Improved Ecological Function	219,000	245,071	\$309	112%
Compensation	18,000	13,548	\$398	75%
TOTAL	317,000	360,631	\$1,880	114%

Program Accomplishments: FY 2005



“Coteau Legacy Plan” FY05 Accomplishments

Conservation Goals/Programs	Direct Program (Acres) ¹	Extension Program (Acres) ²	FY05 Total (Acres)
Protection of Existing Habitat			
Paid Perpetual Easements	6,089	-	6,089
Tax Credit Program	-	95,923	95,923
Habitat Management			
Improved Ecological Function			
Grazing Extension	-	240,900 ³	240,900 ³
Stock Watering Development	-	2010	2010
Deferred Grazing	1360	-	1360
Compensate for Lost Habitats			
Conservation Forages	1,698	-	1,698
Winter Cereals	5,200	6,650	11,850
Total Acres	14,347	346,284	360,631

¹ Direct program – Programs whereby DUC directly impacts actions of producers, improves, or protects habitat.

² Extension program – Programs whereby DUC extends technical advice mutually beneficial to producers and waterfowl habitat.

³ Acres based on entire holdings of producers involved in extension activities. Represents the maximum potential impact on the landscape for the fiscal year.

⁴ Habitat Management - These acres include the existing projects requiring annual management to maintain healthy habitats. The acres in this category are not include in the total of habitat accomplishments.

Program Accomplishments: ...continued



The growth of waterfowl populations wintering in Louisiana hinges greatly on the productivity of the Canadian breeding grounds. The Prairie-Western Boreal Region (PWBR) of DUC is operating on a clear set of goals to protect and restore waterfowl habitat. The PWBR attracts greater than 70% of North America's breeding waterfowl. The Missouri Coteau contributes a high proportion of this production. The outstanding efforts of DUC conservation staff in the Missouri Coteau have resulted in over 50% of the 5 year goals being accomplished after only 2 years.

Progress toward 5-Year Goals

Program	5-Year Goal	Total FY04-05	% Accomplished
Paid Perpetual Easements	10,910	8,564	78%
Tax Credit Program	249,767	187,690	75%
Land Purchase	1,760	0	0%
Grazing Extension	1,049,000	489,780	47%
Stock Watering	-	2010	
Deferred Grazing	10,000	8,860	81%
Government Pastures	66,825	65,028	97%
Conservation Forages	32,330	2,198	7%
Winter Cereals	44,700	21,050	47%
TOTAL	1,465,292	785,180	54%

LDWF's significant contributions to DU in partnership with others have contributed to the securement (minimum 10 year agreement) of 86,660 acres of habitat over the past 2 years. These accomplishments provide habitat capable of supporting 54,000 breeding pairs of ducks over the next 10 years. The impact is even greater through influence on the management and stewardship of an additional 698,520 acres of habitat.